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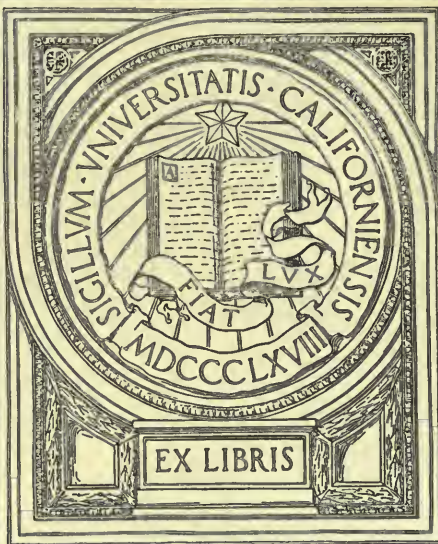
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Louis XI

by

Casimer Delavigne

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
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LOUIS XI.

An Historical Drama

IN

THREE ACTS.

[ADAPTED FROM CASIMER DELAVIGNE.]

BY

W. R. MARKWELL, Esq.,

AUTHOR OF

"Amy Robsart," "The Spirits of the Night," "York Roses,"
"Faust and Margaret," "'Tis an Ill Wind that
Blows Nobody Good," etc., etc., etc.

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LOUIS XI.

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KING'S ATTENDANT.....	Mr. CLIFFORD
MARIE.....	Miss MILLWARD
JEANNE.....	Miss HARWOOD
MARTHA.....	Miss PAYNE

French and Burgundian Lords, Guards, Bishops, Priests,
Peasants, and Pages.

ABRORUAD 70 VIRU
23 BORA 20 LTA
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LOUIS XI.

ACT FIRST.

SCENE FIRST.—*A landscape. The Chateau of Plessis-les-Tours at back, L. U. E. Drawbridge raised, &c.—some scattered cottages, R.—Night.*

TWO SENTINELS *discovered. Pause—*SCOTCH GUARDS *enter and relieve* GUARD.

Enter TRISTAN, L., *with* FOUR SOLDIERS, *meeting* RICHARD, R.

TRISTAN. (*to* RICHARD) Your name ?

RICHARD. The herdsman, Richard.

TRISTAN. Out after nightfall ? 'Tis against the king's command.

RICHARD. I know it, but—

TRISTAN. Back, I say !

RICHARD. My son is—

TRISTAN. Away !

RICHARD. Is dying.

TRISTAN. (*to his* GUARDS) String me up that fellow upon yonder oak.

RICHARD. (*terrified*) Tristan ! *Exit, running, R.*

OFFICER. (*from platform*) Who goes there ?

TRISTAN. Grand Provost.

OFFICER. Guards, alert !

TRISTAN'S GUARDS *go into cottages, R.*

Enter OFFICER and SOLDIERS *over bridge from chateau, L. U. D.*

OFFICER. The watchword ?

TRISTAN. (*in an under tone*) Faithful.

GUARDS *go off, R. U. E.*

OFFICER. (*in the same*) France.

Exeunt ALL *to chateau, R. U. E.—day breaks.*

Enter COMINE, holding a parchment roll—he seats himself at the foot of oak, R. 2 E.

COMINE. This work of mine requires deep thought and quietude of soul. Blest calm! No sound is wafted to mine ear, save chirping birds awaking to the morn, or the hoarse challenge of yon Scotch sentinel who walks the battlements. I'm now alone—here let me read. "Memoirs of Comine." Ah, could Louis read this manuscript—mayhap in after times destined to live—wherein day after day is writ the chronicle of France's shame and glory—he would shudder to behold the gloomy annals of his strange career. Of vice and virtue what a motley group! Here, cowardice—heroic valor, there—here, mercy—there, ensanguined butchery—humble and proud—how different by turns—courting the mass—o'erbearing to the great—miser and spendthrift, jealous—all at will. (*passes to the end of his MS.*) Ah me! the picture makes me shudder as I gaze! See, how the rising sun gilds the tower of yonder castle—Louis's living tomb—where, self-immured, he struggles with inexorable death!

Enter COITIER from chateau, L. U. E.

COITIER. Ha! (*crosses and comes down from L. gate*) Good morrow, Sieur Comine, (*tapping COMINE on the shoulder*).

Comine. (R.) Ah, Coitier! how came you here? You should be beside the king, our master. You are angry!

COITIER. A crime of foulest dye has been committed. This peasant's son, who lies there dying, was shot down by one of the Archer Guard, to try his new arquebuss upon him.

COMINE. Let him complain.

COITIER. To whom? The king! Let lambs complain to wolves. You complained once, and prayed and knelt—do you forget Nemours?

COMINE. Nemours was guilty.

COITIER. You are so to say it.

COMINE. Coitier—

COITIER. I was an humble vassal, fed by the bounty of Nemours. His home was mine—he thought that heaven had given me brains—wits—and so he fostered them; his bounty sent me to the colleges of Paris. My studies prospered—I became renowned. He brought me to court—my rude ways and manners ill suited with the place—men thought me mad—but finding my skill, they called me singular. The king at length made me his surgeon, and by that title I rule him who rules you all. To Nemours I owe

everything—yet, leagued with *you*, we could not stem the fury of the king when he had doomed Nemours to death. All—all his family fell before the tiger—all but one—by your assistance he was saved.

COMINE. Coitier !

COITIER. By yours !

COMINE. For heaven's sake, speak lower !

COITIER. Pity, then, but do not reproach Nemours.

COMINE. Listen—Nemours is now with Charles of Burgundy. When the king dies, and Charles the Dauphin ascends the throne, he will be pardoned.

COITIER. (*sarcastically*) By virtue of your daughter's influence with the prince ?

COMINE. Marie !

COITIER. (*sarcastically*) Of course, you do not see he loves her ?

COMINE. Impossible ! she is betrothed to Nemours. From childhood they have loved each other.

COITIER. Would you be convinced ? Here she comes—ask her.

Enter MARIE, L. U. E.

MARIE. (*crossing to c.*) Good morning, father dear—good day, Master Coitier—what news—how fares the king ?

COITIER. Your smiles prove sweeter physic than my drugs, and he likes 'em better—in which he is not singular.

MARIE. You're a perfect courtier, Sieur Coitier.

COITIER. Well, you have seen this pious man, François de Paule, with whose renown all France is filled—he is coming, it seems, to cure my patient—to work a miracle—to reanimate the king. I'd like to see him

MARIE. What, do you doubt his miraculous power ?

COITIER. (*sneering*) Oh, no ! But I'd rather see than believe it.

MARIE. How simple is his mien ! He wears no mitre gemmed with pearls—before him there is borne no haughty crozier—but simply leaning on a staff, clad in the coarsest robe, he is crowned by the blessings of the poor, and followed by the prayers of a million simple but loving souls.

COITIER. And how did this anchorite meet the Dauphin and the court, who went forth to welcome him ?

MARIE. All, from their steeds alighting, walked on foot beside him, while the Dauphin led the way to Plessis ; next, feudal lords dismounted, attended by their pages, rein in hand ; next, damsels came mingling their gayer summer hues, which floated on the breeze o'er hill and plain.

The cross, too, lifted in the sunbeam, shone ; and Louis' banners with their fleur-de-lis in gold and azure painted. Then, in front, young children censors bore, and strewed fresh flowers on his path, while crowds thronged round to beg his blessing. From Amboise hither, all the roads along, increasing hosts of followers swelled his train. Yonder I left them, and hurried on to tell you of his coming.

COMINE. Then let us hasten to the king.

MARIE. Father, a word.

COITIER. I leave you, then. Farewell.

Exit to castle, L. U. E.

COMINE. Now we're alone, what news ? I see you have a happy secret.

MARIE. Guess.

COMINE. I cannot.

MARIE. The Envoy of Burgundy is here—his heralds and retinue fill our village.

COMINE. His name ?

MARIE. The Count de Rethel.

COMINE. Count de Rethel ! That house has left no heirs to later times.

MARIE. Mayhap he brings some tidings of an exiled friend.

COMINE. Nemours ?

MARIE. Ah, think you so ? Who knows ? absence often tempers love.

COMINE. Marie !

MARIE. His love is, can be, never such as mine. Oft I have tried to cheer his sinking soul ; but he would smile most bitterly, as if consumed by some deep grief. Finding, too, in my artless sympathy some comfort, soon he learnt to speak his love, responsive to my own. Time lingered on—but gloomy, still, he fled society, the Court, its pleasures, and gay tournaments. But the name of Louis would raise his fury, his hand would clutch his poignard, and words of death fester on his lips. The Dauphin, surely would forgive.

COMINE. I know the Dauphin loves thy company—seeks it too much.

MARIE. He is but a boy.

COMINE. A boy that must, one day, be King of France.

MARIE. But, father, 'tis a foolish child.

COMINE. Enough, avoid him, check his freedom—there is danger in it. (*murmurs and distant trumpet, r.*)

MARIE. I obey.

COMINE. Hark ! do you hear the crowd ? (*looking back*)

They fill the wood—they come—the cavalcade descends the hill.
Exeunt L.

Music.—Enter FRANCOIS DE PAULE the DAUPHIN, RICHARD, MARCEL, MARTHA, DIDIER, PRIESTS, and FRENCH KNIGHTS, LADIES, and PEASANTS, R. U. E.—music ceases.

FRANCOIS (R. C.) Prince, let me speak to these poor peasants, for my cares are due to high and low alike.

DAUPHIN. As you will, good father. (*crosses to L.*) We go to announce your coming to the King. (*to his SUITE*) Follow, sirs. *Exeunt DAUPHIN and SUITE to chateau, L. U. E.*

RICHARD. (*crossing to FRANCOIS*) Pray enter 'neath my roof, most rev'rend Priest, and give my son his sight.

FRANCOIS. I am but a man, like you and yours; besides, my body's bent with years—my hair's all blanch'd; and seeing this, you'll judge how little I can do for you. As man, I sympathize with human woes, and old myself, I pity age's ills. Learn how to endure them, there's the antidote. Leave me, my friends, and soon my prayers shall mingle with your own.

RICHARD. (*to MARCEL*) Had I been a count or duke he would have healed my son.

MARCEL. (*to RICHARD*) Ay, brought him back to life. He'll cure the King.

RICHARD. Ay, by to-morrow, too.

MARCEL. But peasants are not worth a miracle.

Exeunt LADIES and PEASANTS, L. 1 E.

Trumpet.—Enter NEMOURS and BURGUNDIAN KNIGHTS, R. U. E.

NEMOURS. (*to his SUITE*) Gentlemen, I pray you precede me to the castle. *Exeunt KNIGHTS to chateau, L. U. E.*

FRANCOIS. Approach, my son.

NEMOURS. Are we alone?

FRANCOIS. Secret from all, but heaven!

NEMOURS. Father, thou hast the ear of heaven.

FRANCOIS. It is open to all.

NEMOURS. Pray for me.

FRANCOIS. For what—thy life! thou art still young.

NEMOURS. But death is everywhere.

FRANCOIS. Youth deems it distant—it is full of hope.

NEMOURS. And full of daring, too—so still more need for fear.

FRANCOIS. Thy purpose?

NEMOURS. Martyrdom.

FRANCOIS. Speak !

NEMOURS. I may not.

FRANCOIS. You contemplate some fatal plan

NEMOURS. I but obey.

FRANCOIS. Whose bidding ?

NEMOURS. That of heaven, crying for vengeance and for blood.

FRANCOIS. Blood !

NEMOURS. Will heaven be complice of unshriven crimes ?

FRANCOIS. His goodness waits, but still the reckoning comes—though late, yet sure.

NEMOURS. Curse the assassin who must die the death.

FRANCOIS. Servant of Him who died to pardon man, I know not how to curse.

NEMOURS. (*kneels*) Then bless me.

FRANCOIS. Bless thee, my son !—my prayers go with thee, and may they guide thee well—we shall meet again here—after—farewell !

Exit L. 2 E.

NEMOURS. (*rises*) Ay, I shall precede thee there. Go, shrive the King—do thine office—his body perish, that's my care—look to his soul, that is thine. Now to beard this French wolf in his lair.

Exit over bridge, L. U. E.

SCENE SECOND.—*A Room in the Chateau of Plessis-les-Tours. The throne C., door R. C.*

MARIE *alone*, near a table, arranging flowers taken from a vase.

MARIE. First, sacred box, then oak leaves I'll entwine ; then these wild roses, lilies, briars, too, of fragrant scent. Here's ivy from the tombs—No, that will scarcely suit a sick man's taste, for 'twould remind him of his coming death—some flower of happier omen I must find to place near France's royal fleur-de-lis.

Enter the DAUPHIN, L. 1 E.

DAUPHIN. At length, Marie, we meet again.

MARIE. (*passing him*) Pardon, my lord.

DAUPHIN. What, leave me ?

MARIE. The King has sent me to the chapel of our Lady, in the wood, to give the order for a festival to-night.

DAUPHIN. Let's go together.

MARIE. Alone, I'll make more speed. An offering to our

Lady of Embrun, I bear with me to deck her festival ; and thither on a similar errand bent, our King himself repairs to ask her aid.

DAUPHIN. Now mark how fickle-minded is the King ;—this morn he meant to have started in the park his favorite hounds, that he himself has trained. He purposed, too, to-morrow, to go forth and fly his golden falcon—watch it pounce upon its quarry ; then, by torchlight, chase the moping owls among our battlements ; all useless tasks to cheer his solitude :—I pity him when mine's so easily amused. My joys are everywhere—in dreams at night—at cock-crow early, and at dusky eve—in every field I view, in the air I breathe, in thine eyes, too, Marie, that smile on me.

MARIE. My lord, at seventeen, all things give delight ; older men dread the future, not so, you. All things are bright to youth ; but I must haste, for this fine day, and flowers, and village dance, will cheer him on his holy pilgrimage.

DAUPHIN. Alas ! *now*, dear Marie, did you but know it, I'm so unhappy.

MARIE. You ?

DAUPHIN. And cause enough to be so. The love I bear my father he rejects.

MARIE. What thoughts !

DAUPHIN. Why, then, did he let my childhood pine away in yonder dismal castle of Amboise ? uncared for, untaught, I scarce can read—you know I can't—and all I *do* know, you taught me.

MARIE. Hush !

DAUPHIN. (*taking a book from his bosom*). But look what I have here.

MARIE. Heavens ! a book ?

DAUPHIN. Yes, of battles, tournaments—let's read it now. Do you correct me, if I make mistakes.

MARIE. Well. I'll stay a while. (*seating herself near the table*) Now, begin.

DAUPHIN. (*putting his book on her lap, and sitting on an ottoman at her feet, reading as MARIE keeps her finger on the page*) "The Chronicles of France, written in the year—"

MARIE. "The year of grace." Well.

DAUPHIN. (*puzzled*) Figures—these I'll skip.

MARIE. And good cause why.

DAUPHIN. "Accounts of tournaments and high exploits—and how a shepherd's daughter saved the land of France and expelled the enemy." I know—'twas Joan of Arc.

MARIE. You've heard of her ?

DAUPHIN. The king bestowed upon her honors, rank—for kings, you know, can give whate'er they please; whilst I, poor child of France, have naught to give. This ring alone is mine—take it.

MARIE. No, no.

DAUPHIN. And should I e'er be King—by this pledge I give my royal word—there's not a title, treasure, in my gift which I'll refuse you.

MARIE. Did I ask an exile's pardon?

DAUPHIN. An exile—you love him! give back the ring.

MARIE. I obey.

DAUPHIN. Keep it—'tis given—yes, 'tis thine. The Dauphin's word the King will not forget.

Enter COMINE, L. 1 E.

COMINE. Your Highness, the King commands your presence instantly.

DAUPHIN. The King! (*crosses to L.*) I tremble in every limb—what can he want? What have I done?

COMINE. Courage, my prince—no need to fear to-day. Duke Charles's envoy has to Plessis come, with all due pomp of heraldry and knights, and Louis, bent on honoring his guest, requests your Highness to present the Duke.

DAUPHIN. Amazed—I tremble like some guilty thing. Good heavens, that son should need to fear his sire! When I see mine, I'm motionless and dumb; I scarce endure the task—and when I see his eyes fixed on me through their half-shut lids, as if to scrutinize and freeze my soul, each kind affection shrinks abashed, and though I love, I shudderingly kiss his hand.

COMINE. Dear Prince, let him not wait!

DAUPHIN. I fly—I would but overcome my terror. (*to MARIE*) Farewell to my Minister of State. *Exit L. 1 E.*

COMINE. Marie, I'd be alone—go wait me in the King's chamber.

MARIE. On my finger, see, the pardon of Nemours!

Exit, R.

COMINE. The Count de Rethel must be bought. The King has by the royal purse won more than by his sword. I am despatched to find this Envoy's price, and in what coin it must be paid—gold—titles—lands!

Enter OFFICER, L. 1 E.

OFFICER. The Count de Rethel.

Exit L. 1 E.

Enter NEMOURS, L.

COMINE. He is here ! Ah, Nemours !

NEMOURS. Is this his living tomb ?

COMINE. Hush ! here echo turns informer—walls have eyes.

NEMOURS. Fit dungeon for a king ! Hard by I've seen the bloody trace of Tristan's work. There's not a tree but he has made a gibbet of it, and bows their branches down with carrion fruit.

COMINE. And you have crossed the threshold ?

NEMOURS. Ay ! my secret's known to you and Coitier, and which of you two will betray me ?

COMINE. Neither !

NEMOURS. Could Louis recognize me ? No ! But once he saw me—'twas on that fatal day, when butcher-like my brothers and myself he forced beneath the scaffold reeking with our father's blood.

COMINE. Why seek then one so fatal to thy race ?

NEMOURS. To beard the dying tyrant !

COMINE. Nemours !

NEMOURS. I'm charged with words that shall whiten his cheek, and make him quail !

COMINE. Beware !

NEMOURS. Let *him* beware. I'll make the regal monster pale, as he made me once.

COMINE. Hast thou forgotten Marie ?

NEMOURS. Marie !

COMINE. Listen, Nemours—'tis in your power to reconcile two princes and their states, and end a civil war ! which act, too, would once restore you to your friends, your country—all ! Yield, my son, the King will pardon thee—forget—

NEMOURS. Forget ? What, forget his crime ? The scaffold—victim—what, forget that horrid scene ! Three prostrate children 'neath the ensanguined block—their parent's altar. Ay, there we were conducted by his order—there as I stood with face uplifted, as I heard my father's faltering words, his last expiring prayer, I felt what seemed to be his tears that fell upon my brow—no, no—these eyes shed tears no more—no tears.

COMINE. Nemours !

NEMOURS. 'Twas blood, a cherished father's blood. Forget—he may forget—ay, if he can, but I—oh, never !

COMINE. Hark, 'tis he—away !

NEMOURS. Now to confront him, then.

COMINE. Your grave is measured.

NEMOURS. Be it so. Then see to it, I'll have no tears shed for me—none ! But such as my father wept, and those I'll make to flow. Farewell ! *Exit L.*

COMINE. He is lost. *Exit R.*

Enter LOUIS, R. C., preceded by the COUNT DE DREUX, and followed by COITIER, OLIVER, KNIGHTS, COURT discovered, and CITIZENS.

LOUIS. (to DREUX) Pacque Dieu ! Look up ! Beware, Count, or by the rood, if one more murmur or complaint I hear, I'll have my hand upon you—then look to your soul, Heaven soilzie it—as for your body, I'll provide for that.

DREUX. (R.) But I humbly beg—

LOUIS. (L.) Deny it not—look up. Instead of two hundred golden crowns, you've raised two thousand from these good folks. (*pointing to the CITIZENS*) You have robbed and plundered *them* and *me*—by no means the least of your crimes. Look at this dead King you so despise—is he alive or not ?

DREUX. I pray you, sire—

LOUIS. I'm not so ill as men would make me out to be ; some fire still gleams, when angry, in mine eyes—I live—the ailing one's less pale than thou, though old, too, noble sir. I'll outlive you and others too—I'm man enough for that. Whoe'er desires to play a game like yours, his heart had better fail him, ere he try. Mine is the right divine by heritage ; to me alone, unshared, it still belongs. You'll find to touch that right is dangerous, and has been fatal to much loftier men than thou—proud vassals whom I forced to bow. Oliver, you have seen those troublous times ?

OLIVER. (L. C.) Yes, sire, and e'en this day you're still the same.

LOUIS. More numerous—ay, and haughtier, too, than he. The game was bloody, and the quarry high ; my scythe mowed down the thorns so near the root, 'twere vain to search which way it swept along—it cut down Nemours—sharply, it may be—for an example ; and, perhaps, again may do the like. (to DREUX) Hast thou got brats like him ? Advance !

DREUX. (*terrified*) Sire ! (*aside to COITIER*) For pity's sake—

COITIER. (L.) Sire, passion is dangerous.

LOUIS. True, but I am better since I saw that holy man.

COITIER. Have faith in him, then, only. Is that eye of fury, and yon passion-bloated lip, of his prescribing ?

LOUIS. Coitier !

COITIER. Oh, don't rail at me—you're wrong.

LOUIS. Coitier!

COITIER. Yes, wrong, and I am right. Hold! the mischief's done—your color's changed.

LOUIS. What?

COITIER. Ay!

LOUIS. Well, I'll be calm!

COITIER. No, suffer on;—ay, die, if such be your will!

LOUIS. (*To COITIER, aside*) Peace! (*To DREUX*) As for you, what you have ta'en, give back within three days, as ransom for your head; or else, convinced you little value it, I'll have the same cut off, and (*looking back at COITIER*) not in rage, for rage is dangerous.

DREUX. I submit.

LOUIS. Well, just such a game cost dear to Sieur Mélun! he was a count, too—same pride—same fate—have a care—Tristan watches you; and what I've said to one, I'll do to all. Now, go! (*DREUX retires up*)

OLIVER. Sire, the envoys from the Helvetic Cantons wait.

LOUIS. Pacque Dieu! Begone with them!

OLIVER. Not see them?

LOUIS. No, I hate republics.

COMINE. (*Comes down R.*) Sire I venture to observe, you've recognized their chartered rights and liberty.

LOUIS. I know it. Freedom! ah! an old word—hated sound; I like it not. Liberty—nick-name for tyranny. Free! rustics, peasants, chamois-hunters, boors!

COMINE. Their rights they know bravely how to defend.

LOUIS. What! would they have *me* take part with them, against my beloved cousin, Burgundy, whose ambassador is here? No, no! (*aside to OLIVER*) Treat with them.

OLIVER. (*aside L. c.*) How?

LOUIS. (*aside*) Give what you must, and promise them the rest.

OLIVER. (*aside*) Enough.

LOUIS. (*aloud*) Banquet them and let them go. (*aside*) with our French wine you may do much—they are Swiss, and drink hard—go! (*to COITIER, who is going up, L.*) Where goest thou?

COITIER. In yon banquet, sire, I meant to take my part.

LOUIS. Sit at the head, Coitier; but pray be watchful o'er your health.

COITIER. Answer for yourself; I will do the like.

LOUIS. Indulgent to themselves—heedless of others' ills—such are physicians.

CORTIER. Yes, and many more of whom your Majesty takes great account—who preach, but do not practice, abstinence.

LOUIS. Go, scoffer!

Exit CORTIER, R. C.]

Well, Comine, what says yon count?

COMINE. He's incorruptible.

LOUIS. That cannot be.

COMINE. He spurned your gifts.

LOUIS. Because you didn't offer him enough. I'll treat with him myself—admit him!

COMINE. Sir, believe me, 'tis in vain—do not receive him.

Enter MARIE, C.

LOUIS. Begone!

Exit COMINE, R.

Well, Marie, hast thou been harvesting among the flowers?

MARIE. (R.) I call the neighboring bushes to attest I have not spared a bud.

LOUIS. What of yon holy man? Hast seen his miracles?

MARIE. Not one.

LOUIS. Ay, he reserves his power for meal one—but go, my pretty child, here come affairs of state.

Enter DAUPHIN R. C.

DAUPHIN. (R. C.) Sire, the Envoy from Duke Charles, the Count de Rethel, awaits an audience.

Trumpets.—The KING ascends his throne, C.—Enter NEMOURS, COMINE, GOLDEN FLEECE, KING-AT-ARMS, TRISTAN, and SUITE, R. C.

MARIE. (*recognizing NEMOURS*) Ah!

LOUIS. (*aside*) Pacque Dieu! Marie knows him. (*to*

MARIE) Go, child.

Exit MARIE, R. C.

NEMOURS. (R., *aside*) My body trembles with convulsive dread—'tis he, the murderer of my sire.

LOUIS. (*after reading the credentials presented by a kneeling HERALD*) Why thus confused, Sir Count? Compose yourself.

NEMOURS. (R.) Anger, as well as fear, will blanch the cheek.

LOUIS. Anger—for what?

NEMOURS. You shall learn. Know, sire, that the High Lord, Duke Charles of Burgundy, first peer of France, and Sovereign prince—

LOUIS. I know the States, of which I'm paramount—to the point.

NEMOURS. He charges you, then, King of France, with breach of faith. You have espoused the quarrel of the Swiss, aided and succored their rebellion; and while those rebels, sire, defy our arms, you here receive their chiefs within your walls.

LOUIS. I have not seen, and will not see them, Count. What more?

NEMOURS. Lords of Braacas and Chabanne have, lance in hand, surprised our citadels.

LOUIS. The wrong be on their heads—they both have acted 'gainst my will.

NEMOURS. The proof.

LOUIS. You shall have it.

NEMOURS. Ay, sire, I must, and more.

LOUIS. What?

NEMOURS. Their punishment.

LOUIS. You exact too much—I ought to hear their plea, ere I condemn.

NEMOURS. (*passionately*) Your axe has, for a less crime, caused many a nobler head to fall.

LOUIS. (*rising*) What mean you?

NEMOURS. At the last assize—above—your outraged judge will show you *whose* I mean!

LOUIS. Charles the Bold has an outspoken Envoy. His "nom-de-guerre" was never more deserved. 'Tis well—oh, very well—proceed, proceed!

NEMOURS. I will. Know, then, Louis of Valois, King of France, that Charles, for the grievances this paper cites, demands full justice, which denied, through me, he threatens, in the name of France's weal, the lions bold of Burgundy to loose. For every duchy, county, fief, or right of which he's seized, as vassal to your crown, now he acquits himself—abjures his fealty, and declares himself the champion of those sainted souls whose blood thy ruthless hand has shed. Those martyrs he invokes to aid his cause; and now, as knight, as peer, as prince, to single combat dares thee to the field. So God defend the right! (*throws down a glove*) There's his gage—who lifts it?

DAUPHIN. (*starts forward from L. and picks up the glove*) I, for Valois and the lilies. (*Tableau.*)

LOUIS. Stand back! give place! (*advances.*) 'Tis well, Charles! By the mass, a true son of France!

DAUPHIN. (*affected*) Father!

LOUIS. (*coldly pushing away the DAUPHIN*) Give place. Take up the gauntlet, Golden Fleece—the grasp of that young hand hath honored it. (*to CAVALIERS*) Look you,

gentlemen, the king is outraged here, and you shall see how, as a king, I can repay. (*to NEMOURS*) Count, take back this menace, and praise my clemency, which, for your fierce fidelity to him you serve, forgives your boldness—Charles has a treasure in you ! I'll keep this writing—we'll read it lovingly, as peacemakers should do. After our pilgrimage there to the woodland chapel, let us meet as friends—as Christian friends ; forgetting trespass, and full of charity.

NEMOURS. We meet, sire, as king and envoy—my duty is obedience—I shall be there.

Flourish—Exit NEMOURS and SUITE, R.C.—LOUIS signs to ALL to retire, and TRISTAN to remain at back of stage.—

Exit DAUPHIN, GUARDS, and PAGES, L.

LOUIS. Good Comine, stay.

COMINE. (R.) Had you taken my advice, sire, you would never have admitted him.

LOUIS. I rather love those who are roused to rage : better and sooner I can read their minds. Burgundy I must calm by signing this. His rashness, ere long, will prove his ruin. The worthy Campo Basso, whom he loves, would sell him at a pinch, and sell himself ; for he's without his peer at treachery. My cousin's pride is sure to make him fail ; to stop him on his way were impious. (*after a pause*) My son—an early age to be so bold !

COMINE. Worthy young scion of his sire ! how quick he flew to undertake so good a cause !

LOUIS. (*thoughtfully*) Dangerous he would prove, should he rebel.

COMINE. What, sire ?

LOUIS. Too well, I know't ; for I, myself, know what a dauphin once did 'gainst his king.

COMINE. He's a good prince.

LOUIS. Comine—this Count de Rethel knows my daughter ?

COMINE. (*astonished*) He ?

LOUIS. Answer.

COMINE. I learned while she was at the Court of Burgundy, and I was in France, he saw her, and—and—

LOUIS. He saw and loved her ?

COMINE. I think so, sire.

LOUIS. He loves her, yet he's proof to bribery. Go—go to my chamber. (*aside*) I'll gather more from her.

Exit COMINE, L., whom LOUIS locks in his closet.

LOUIS. (*to TRISTAN, who is at back, R.*) Hither !

TRISTAN. I'm here.

LOUIS. Yet nearer—nearer still.

TRISTAN. I'll listen with mine eyes—speak low.

LOUIS. Well, I've forgiven this chanticleer.

TRISTAN. So you said.

LOUIS. 'Tis true.

TRISTAN. No doubt.

LOUIS. But if Heaven should decree some overflow to Burgundy, would it be right to let the Count bear off the treaty?

TRISTAN. Both are in your power.

LOUIS. What d'ye mean—violence? to an ambassador! Not for my kingdom. No, not *here*.

TRISTAN. How then?

LOUIS. An escort will attend him, when he leaves.

TRISTAN. To do him honor?

LOUIS. Ay, to do him honor.

TRISTAN. Who will command it?

LOUIS. Thou.

TRISTAN. Ah! and how shall I compose the troop?

LOUIS. Of men, you know—right trusty men.

TRISTAN. Numerous?

LOUIS. More so than his.

TRISTAN. Of course—to do him honor!

LOUIS. And then, who knows but on the road—Hark!
(*bell tolls*) What's that—the Angelus?

Takes off his cap, and stands as if in reverence—TRISTAN imitates him—the bell ceases—he replaces his cap.

LOUIS. Who knows but on the road?—He's proud.

TRISTAN. Most arrogant.

LOUIS. 'Twixt the two bands, a quarrel might ensue.

TRISTAN. It might.

LOUIS. It should.

TRISTAN. It shall!

LOUIS. Defend yourself!

TRISTAN. Trust me for that.

LOUIS. And so, get back the treaty.

TRISTAN. But the Count?—

LOUIS. Not understand me yet?

TRISTAN. We must—

LOUIS. (*patting him on the chin playfully*) A smile! Ha, ha, ha! d'ye see me now, eh, gossip—eh?

TRISTAN. I understand. *They go up towards R.C.*

END OF ACT FIRST.

ACT SECOND.

SCENE FIRST.—*A Forest—at 1., the Chapel of our Lady of the Woods, with projecting and covered doorway, and steps leading up to it—on the R.C. side, a rustic seat at the foot of an old oak.*

Music.—*As the curtain rises, RICHARD, MARCEL, DIDIER, MARTHA, JULIE, and TRADESPEOPLE are discovered—the VILLAGERS are seen dancing in circle—after dance, they separate into various groups, R. and L., conversing.*

MARTHA. (*approaching MARCEL.*) Is the King better?

MARCEL. So 'tis said—who knows?

MARTHA. How long these kings, Marcel, do linger!

MARCEL. His birth's so good he's loath to leave it, wife.

JULIE. Health is worth its weight in gold; and his, they say, costs a good round sum to the treasury.

DIDIER. Ay, we've proof of that in tax-gatherers who plunder us.

MARCEL. Duties on everything—e'en on our merriment. Now, fun I dearly love; but fun that's forced—

MARTHA. To dance for pleasure's well, but at command—

JULIE. To please another when half dead with fear—

RICHARD. (L.) The worst of taxes were to be preferred.

MARCEL. They're coming now—to your places. (*he sings*)

DIDIER. (*to MARCEL*) Here come some Scotch Guards.

Enter TWO OFFICERS and TWO SCOTCH GUARDS, L. 2 E.

TRADESMAN. (*to one of the GUARDS*) Good sir, for pity's sake pay me—

MARCEL. Here's one of them been making free with something.

1st GUARD. (*to TRADESMAN*) Not a denier. Were I to pay a Jew, what would my confessor say? Off, miscreant! (*pushes him aside, and crosses to R.C.—to MARTHA*) A word, my pretty lass.

MARCEL. (*interfering*) But she's my wife, sir.

1st GUARD. What matter? I'm one of the family, and I'll have a kiss. (*kisses MARTHA, and crosses to R.*)

MARCEL. (*taking off his cap and bowing*) You do me uncommon honor.

1st GUARD. Thou ow'st the king's people a toll for that pretty wife of thine, and now I've taken it. To-morrow we'll pay thee another call. *Exeunt GUARDS, laughing, L.*

MARTHA. They might have spared me that detested kiss. (*wiping her cheek*). Nothing is sacred from these libertines.

DIDIER. They plague us worse than wind, or hail, or forest laws.

MARCEL. Ay, work away, get in your yearly crops, ay, just to let them, from their swallows' nests, come swarming down, and scatter terror, shame, and misery, where'er their fury lights. Hush, here's Sieur Oliver.

(PEASANTS *pretend gayety, and resume dancing, &c.*)

Enter OLIVER, R.U.E.

OLIVER. (R.) So—dancing—singing—well done!

MARCEL. You see, monsieur, how happy we are all!

(*crosses to C.*)

OLIVER. I came on purpose to judge for myself; but let the fete proceed—laugh, dance, and sing all heartily. You know I am the people's friend.

MARCEL. (*aside*) Not long ago he was our village barber. MARTHA. We took good care to do so, for the Grand Provost has given us notice, that, as noon struck, we were to be making merry, and good Sieur, Tristan hears of no excuse when he would have us happy—only look at us.

OLIVER. 'Tis bravely done! Maybe the King will venture hither on so fine a day.

DIDIER. The King!

MARTHA. Among us!

OLIVER. Yes, surely. Why, what ails the man?

MARCEL. 'Tis joy, joy, sir; and—and the sudden shock—the King!

OLIVER. Well, fool! Hark, you must try to amuse him, and gladden his heart, by some song or story. Tell him he looks vastly well. Eh? tell him all you think.

MARCEL. What, all?

OLIVER. Why not?

MARCEL. Well, I'll complain o' th' people about the King.

MARTHA. Of the Scotch Guards I.

DIDIER. I, of the forest laws.

VILLAGER. And I—

OLIVER. Hold hard—this boldness is too much.

MARCEL. Excuse me, monseigneur, we think—

OLIVER. Good people think the King desires their good! Say you love him.

MARCEL. So we do.

OLIVER. As son should love a father?

MARCEL. Just so.

OLIVER. Well—tell him so, when he comes. Hush! he is here!

ALL. Where? (*they tumble over each other in fright—ALL cross to L.*)

OLIVER. There—(*points*) coming from the hermitage.

MARCEL. Eh—what! That pale, infirm old man the King?

OLIVER. Sing, dance—quick! But mind you do not recognize him.

The dance is resumed.—Enter LOUIS and TRISTAN, R. U. E.—During this and the following scenes TRISTAN appears, from time to time as if on guard over LOUIS.

LOUIS. (*coming slowly forward, and falling exhausted on a rustic seat, R.*) The sunlight dazzles, and the mid-day heat oppresses me. The air was lighter, purer, once. Climates have changed.

OLIVER. (*R., pointing to PEASANTS*) Sire, mingle with their sport. You are not known here. Address them. (*to PEASANTS*) Approach.

LOUIS. (*to MARTHA*) Are you the farmer's wife?

MARTHA. So I am, sir, please ye.

LOUIS. (*as he contemplates her*) Bounteous nature! How do you contrive to keep such health, such blooming cheeks?

MARTHA. (*after a pause*) I know not. We have it as Heaven wills. 'Tis natural, and visits us, methinks, as grass clothes fields, and acorns grow in woods. Up at cock-crow, we commence our farming toil—husband goes a-field—wife at home—the work goes on, and makes a frugal meal taste like a banquet. No bed is hard to those who rise at dawn. Hard work, good appetite, good conscience too, and sleep enough—such are our guides to health.

LOUIS. What, never sad?

MARTHA. Yes—when bread is dear! Still, in my chimney corner I can gayly sing, spite all my cares—for they who suffer gayly have less grief; and there is none so poor but that a poorer still is jealous of his luck.

LOUIS. (*to OLIVER*) These humble folks find joy in everything. Have you no ailments that require the doctors?

MARCEL. (*crossing to him*) Not we. Doctors!—no, no!

LOUIS. How's that?

MARCEL. I'm no such fool. They take your coin, and do no good. Better to buy a cask of wine, mellow with age—that's the best medicine—and very fond I am of it. As for those doctors, they only give you hopes; and on one goes

a-hoping, until some fine day—crack—good bye—we're gone.

LOUIS. (*rising*) Thou fearest not death?

MARCEL. I never give it thought, but think of vineyards, and of harvest dream; and, lacking comfort, whisper to myself, "Our little Marcel is a fine, brave boy—his mother's, father's pet. He grows each year. I've had *my* time, and he'll have *his*, dear lad. We'll save up well, that he may never want—never regret our loss; for anyhow, sooner or later, sons their sires succeed."

LOUIS. The later, sure, the better.

MARCEL. Yes, of course.

OLIVER. (*aside to MARCEL and over LOUIS's shoulder*) Fool!

MARCEL. Am I wrong?

OLIVER. Physicians have vast skill.

MARCEL. 'Twas of our village barber that I spoke. (*meaningly*) And all the world knows what these barbers are.

LOUIS. (*laughing and slapping OLIVER's back*) Here's one who knows the secret of the trade better far than thee.

OLIVER. (*angrily to MARCEL*) Why laugh'st thou, man?

MARCEL. What, I? Monseigneur just made a remark that I thought funny—that was why I smiled.

LOUIS. You call him Master Oliver—le Diable—is't not so?

MARCEL. No.

LOUIS. You do.

MARTHA. (*to MARCEL*) 'Tis dangerous to say too much. Be mum! (*crosses to R.*)

LOUIS. Come, we're close friends. Pray tell me.

MARTHA. Wind and storm we may abuse, for neither doth one jot our railing heed; but with great men 'tis quite another thing—and we must whisper close our lightest words—all's said is sure to reach them, and mayhap at morn we'll rue the laugh we had at night.

LOUIS. (*to MARCEL*) And in all truth, fearest thou not death?

MARCEL. Why should I? Yes, I remember how my heart failed me when I once beheld a bad man's funeral, its priestly pomp—the service and the burial chant! I fancied demons in the darkness round, hovering in waiting for their prey, which not e'en all the gold he loved so well, and earned so ill, could purchase back.

LOUIS. Oh, agony! despair! torture! (*crosses to R.*)

OLIVER. (*aside to MARCEL*) Fool!

MARCEL. (*not heeding*) I was, I own; and yet I could not help it—he was a murderer!

LOUIS. (*violently*) Begone! (*to himself*) Death—hell! (*to MARCEL*) Begone! No—come, tell me, wretch—who bid thee thus address me?

MARCEL. (*falling on his knees*) Nobody.

LOUIS. (*violently*) You've been bribed to do it. By whom? whom?

MARCEL. No, no—

OLIVER. (*R., aside to LOUIS*) Sire, sire, command yourself.

MARTHA. (*crosses to him*) There's no malice in his jests—pardon him.

LOUIS. (*laughs faintly*) Ha, ha! 'twas nothing—I was but jesting with the fool (*to MARTHA*). Is he your husband?

MARTHA. Ay.

LOUIS. (*unbending again*) Well, I'll pardon him, if you will tell me one thing true, with that pretty face, those rosy cheeks, those eyes—you have lovers in the village—who are they?

MARCEL. Name them all, Martha—don't mind me.

MARTHA. (*smiling*) Well, then, I've only one.

LOUIS. Who's that?

MARTHA. Yourself.

LOUIS. (*putting his arm round her waist*) Ha, ha, ha!

MARTHA. Ha, ha!

LOUIS. What, me—an aged man?

MARTHA. No, not so very old.

LOUIS. No! Ha, ha!

MARTHA. You've a bright eye.

OLIVER. (*aside*) Bravo!

MARTHA. Yes, quite a roguish air.

LOUIS. Ah, chuck! Ha, ha!

MARTHA. A girl with you might rue her trust! and might I have a wish, it would be this—that, like you in humor and in face, our King may look as young and hale as you.

LOUIS. As me?

MARTHA. Then, sir, we all should be without a care, for you will surely live a century.

LOUIS. A century!

(*Here OLIVER slips a purse into her hand, which she shows behind to the other PEASANTS, then crosses behind to the KING, R.*)

LOUIS. (*affected, to OLIVER*) Oliver, d'ye hear—d'ye hear? (*to MARTHA*) Pardieu, my child! that king you wish so well (*taking her round the waist and heartily kissing her*), that king that looks so hale, now kisses thee.

MARTHA. (*kneeling*) The King!

ALL. (*kneeling*) Long live the King.

LOUIS. Good people ! their joy goes to my heart.

OLIVER. Because it comes from theirs.

LOUIS. Thanks, in the name of France and of myself. (*to MARTHA*) Ah ! live a century ! (*gives her money*) Here, and here (*scatters money*). Go and rejoice—drink to my hundred years.

MARCEL. Ay, ten times o'er.

MARTHA. Ay, do ; and I shall tell them—that I will—that I had two big kisses from the King.

Exeunt MARCEL, RICHARD, DIDIER, MARTHA, PEASANTS, &c. L.,

LOUIS, c., (*with emotion*) How sweet to be so loved !

OLIVER. (R.) 'Tis true.

LOUIS. A century ! I dare not hope it ; yet my horoscope so bodes.

OLIVER. Is't possible ?

LOUIS. Oh, let me but live to level in the dust yon tyrant lords of France—to see my vassal princes forced to pawn their jewels—barons, penniless, and dukes without broad lands to boast of, ruined all, and all their power conjoined in me, to form one kingdom 'neath one law—the law of France, where all shall be people—all—all BUT ME !

OLIVER. Heaven grant it so.

LOUIS. My cousin Charles, once dead, then the well-beloved Dukes of Burgundy shall be extinct forever. Hold, apropos, where is Marie ?

OLIVER. (*pointing to the chapel door, L.*) There !

(*Trumpet and CRIES of "Vive le Dauphin !" are heard.*)

LOUIS. What's that shouting ?

OLIVER. (*crosses to L., and meets TRISTAN entering L., who informs him by action*). Sire, the Dauphin now is passing through the hamlet, and those shouts come from your loving people.

Shouts and cries repeated.

LOUIS. Still those shouts annoy me ! The Dauphin must bide his time—he's not king yet. Retire—he's here.

Exit OLIVER and TRISTAN into the chapel, L.

Enter the DAUPHIN and TWO PAGES, L.

LOUIS. What ails you ?—why those tears ?

DAUPH. All along my road the people greeted me with cries of welcome.

LOUIS. Splendid cause for happiness, these rustic shouts ! Be advised, my son—judge better of your late reception here—'twas I that told them, paid them, to do this.

DAUPH. What, Sire ?—this joy was it at your commands !

LOUIS. At mine. Now profit by the lesson, prince—begone! to-morrow you return to Ambiose.

DAUPH. What have I done?

LOUIS. You! what would you dare to do?—what could you? Nothing.

DAUPH. Not even please you; but—

LOUIS. Speak!

DAUPH. It was a dream.

LOUIS. Go on.

DAUPH. I dreamed, or hoped, that your arms, sire, would open wide to clasp me. I dreamed you loved me—but—

LOUIS. Then you suppose I love you not? I hate you, eh? Ungrateful boy!

DAUPH. Sire!

LOUIS. Thus men talk. Who told you so?—your uncle, Orleans? (*familiarly*) Now, Charles, my son, be frank. In confidence tell me their names. I will not punish them. I only wish to know.

DAUPH. Well, my uncle says—

LOUIS. He says?

DAUPH. That some day I shall reign o'er France, and ought to make myself beloved.

LOUIS. (*aside*) The traitor! (*aloud*) Does he not say that, weakened by disease, I must, ere-long—But it's false! In short, that you have nought to do but seize the crown, which will ere-long, fall of itself into your hands. The traitor lies—he lies! Do I totter 'neath the load of all the fiefs of France?

DAUPH. Oh, my father, how you wrong me! Could I add my life to yours, and so prolong your days, I'd give my life up willingly.

LOUIS. (*taking away his hand, which the DAUPHIN has taken to kiss*) Go!

(DAUPHIN, about to go, returns, and weeping, kisses LOUIS's hand.)

LOUIS. (*affected, and aside*) 'Tis a good boy! Mayhap, though, I'm deceived. (*crosses to R. C., and seats himself on bank.*)

Enter MARIE, from the chapel, L.

DAUPH. (*aside to MARIE*) Adieu, and think of me. I leave to-morrow. (*he kisses her hand*) Fare thee well!

Exeunt DAUPHIN and PAGES, L.

MARIE. (*looks compassionately after him—seeing LOUIS*) Pardon, sire.

LOUIS. (*aside*) 'Tis she! (*aloud*) Come hither, child.

How beautiful thou art ! Here, sit near me. (*she does so*)
So, don't blush. Were I a stripling now, I could say that
would fetch a smile upon your lip, but now what am I ?

MARIE. You are a great king, sire.

LOUIS. Some brides and bridegrooms, whom I have made
happy, have told me so ; and now I think of it, I had all
but made a match for you myself.

MARIE. For me ?

LOUIS. Ay, I had made out for you quite a long love-tale.
Shall I tell it you ?

MARIE. Do, sire, do.

LOUIS. Listen, then. Once on a time, at the court of
Charles of Burgundy, there lived a lovely maiden, who
loved a young, noble, and handsome cavalier.

MARIE. (*anxiously*) Proceed !

LOUIS. You're interested.

MARIE. Very.

LOUIS. Well, they were parted by an unhappy fate—but
so fondly did the young knight love his mistress, that he
penetrated to the Court of France, where she lived, in the
disguise of—what think ye ?

MARIE. What, sire ?

LOUIS. An envoy. Ha !

MARIE. An envoy, sire ? You jest.

LOUIS. 'Tis but a tale—let me go on. I did suspect his
love, and taxed him with it—he nobly owned his passion.

MARIE. And you, sire ?

LOUIS. Consented to bestow the maiden's hand upon
him.

MARIE. On him—on him !

LOUIS. On whom ? 'Tis but a jest—a tale ! You're not
in love !

MARIE. (*frightened*) Oh, sire, who has betrayed him ?

LOUIS. Who ! Your own father.

MARIE. He told you ?

LOUIS. Yes—all.

MARIE. He named him ?

LOUIS. Ay.

MARIE. You spare his life—forgive ?

LOUIS. I do.

MARIE. (*transported with joy*) Nemours !

LOUIS. (*rises and crosses to C.*)
(*rising in triumph—aside*) It is Nemours ! So, so,
so !

MARIE. Oh, moment full of happiness, of triumph ! Let
me see him—dry his tears, and share his pleasure.

LOUIS. No, no, not yet.

MARIE. Why not? If chance should this way guide his steps—

LOUIS. (*shaking his finger, playfully*) Chance?

MARIE. Well, then—No, I ought to tell you all. I'm pledged to meet Nemours here, now, at his desire.

LOUIS. Hush! poor Nemours believes himself unknown—for weighty reasons let him think so still. Mind, promise me, Marie, by his life, which rests upon your silence.

MARIE. I will—I will!

LOUIS. (*crossing to L.—aside*) Nemours! A word from me, he dies. Shall I speak that word? Tristan!

(*TRISTAN comes down L.*)

LOUIS. (*to MARIE*) I'll leave you here. (*kisses her*) My child, farewell! (*pointing to the image of the Virgin*) She watches you! *Exeunt LOUIS and TRISTAN into the chapel, L.*

MARIE. How sweet to me that kiss!—'tis mercy's pledge! But ah! this unexpected joy's too great. Let not my eyes play tell-tale upon my heart. Oh, Heaven! I tremble, smile, and weep at once with vast excess of joy. He comes!

Enter NEMOURS, R. 2 E.

Nemours!

NEMOURS. Marie! at last we meet!

MARIE. In your own land, beneath the sky of France.

NEMOURS. Which once beheld my sufferings.

MARIE. Hope.

NEMOURS. For death?

MARIE. No, no—an angel whispers me all will yet be well.

NEMOURS. More beautiful than ever!

MARIE. Absent, then, you still thought of me.

NEMOURS. Sweet Marie!

MARIE. When I was gathering in the dew the offering which I have on the altar placed, the flowers, which leaf by leaf my fingers culled, told of your true love and faith for me, dear Nemours.

NEMOURS. Your loving words fall strangely on my ear. Their warm affection daunts my very hate.

MARIE. Why hate, dear Nemours? It is so very sweet to love! The king's not steeled against all sympathy; all's possible, and in my wondrous bliss I think all good—I can naught foresee that does not beam with hope. Thy good alone I can predict. Nemours, dost thou remember that summer's evening when thy avowal told me of thy love?

NEMOURS. It was beneath a solitary cross.

MARIE. My downcast eyes counted my rosary—but yet I heard. You recollect it all?

NEMOURS. Could I forget? No, Marie—once more I am beside thee—but soon, too soon to part—for exile seems my doom. Lands I have none—my heritage is gone, e'en from my father's roof perforce expelled, I'm foreigner in this my native land. As I came hither, I passed those walls the cradle of my infancy. Sad, seared at heart, I heard the rippling brook murmur around those ivied battlements. How oft beneath the beechen avenue, which shaded once my ancestors, did I incline to hear the brawling of those rills! The axe has felled those well-remembered woods—the castle is in ruins—the courtyard's green with weeds; and ivy, brier too, o'ergrows its once so hospitable door, which way-worn pilgrims now approach in vain. My father's portrait from the wainscot torn, lay in a corner, 'midst the rubbish piled; none of the servants knew their master's heir—no, none, but the old house-dog on the hearth, and he raised up his head to lick my hand. My home! It rather seemed to be my tomb!

MARIE. No, Nemours, no. Still in that princely manor-house your numerous vassals may their mistress bless, kiss her white mantle, and between them part the nuptial flowers fallen from her hair. Happy we yet may be, if we, on bended knees before that shrine, by holy benisons shall wedded be.

NEMOURS. Thou art my guardian angel, beauteous Marie! And yet methinks thy words are like a lover's tale traced on the sea shore—destined soon to be effaced by the coming tide.

MARIE. Oh, could I, dare I speak!

NEMOURS. Marie!

MARIE. No, no, I may not; but silence is torture. Hush! they come—they come! (*looking at the church*) I've nothing said.

Enter PEASANTS from behind chapel, L. 3 E., and group L. 1 E.

BURGUNDIAN KNIGHTS, BANNERS, and HERALDS enter, R. 3 E., and range down R.—FRENCH KNIGHTS, HERALDS, BANNERS, and ARCHERS enter, L. 3 E., and range across the back.—LOUIS, supported by OLIVER and TRISTAN, comes from chapel, down steps towards C., followed by PAGES and NOBLES, and range across L. of C.—FRANCOIS DE PAULE stands on steps of the chapel, attended by CARDINAL and PRIESTS.

LOUIS. Here hatred dies, a king forgives—it is his dearest privilege. I love my people, and for their sake I have yielded, not to the haughty menace of my foe. Here is the treaty—let it be done with all solemnity and worthy saintly presence.

(gives parchment to COMINE.)

FRANÇOIS. (on the steps of the chapel-porch between Two PRIESTS, one holding a shrine, the other a cross) My son, I am but a simple man, living apart from the world, from courts; but oft in cottages their humble mourning proves me this sad fact—that kings gain less by brilliant victories than subjects lose by rapine and the sword. King, 'tis your privilege, and duty, too, not to divide, but to unite mankind—I am most ready to record so blest a pledge.

NEMOURS. (R.) For the Duke Charles—that treaty signed, he asks no more, but in oblivion buries all his wrongs.

LOUIS. To Charles of Burgundy I here engage my faith, and swear—

• Enter the DAUPHIN and ARMED FOLLOWERS, L. 11.

DAUPH. (running to LOUIS) My father!

LOUIS. How?

DAUPH. Sire, pardon me—news has just arrived. Duke Charles, your enemy—

LOUIS. My enemy! what now? Charles, my ally—my brother—

DAUPH. He's vanquished.

LOUIS. What, what, what, what!

DAUPH. His army is defeated!

NEMOURS. Charles the Bold?

LOUIS. Art sure of this?

DAUPH. The Sieurs De Torcy, Sire Dunois, and De Lude, received the news. One of his lieutenants has betrayed his cause, and all is lost.

NEMOURS. False reports. The Duke of Burgundy—

DAUPH. Is dead.

LOUIS. The proof.

DAUPH. 'Tis here. (giving despatches to LOUIS)

NEMOURS. What, vanquished—dead! No, no, whatever they say, I—Count de Rethel, on my life—maintain 'tis false!

LOUIS. 'Tis true, Duke of Nemours!

DAUPH. Nemours!

Enter FRENCH and SCOTCH GUARDS, R., led by OFFICERS—
they range down stage, R.C.

LOUIS. As true as that thou art a perjurer, impostor, spy,

guilty of high treason to thy king, and falsehood. Ho ! arrest him ! (*trumpet*)

NEMOURS. (*drawing his sword*) A Burgundy ! a Burgundy !
(*to the BURGUNDIAN KNIGHTS.*)

LOUIS. St. Denis for France ! (*to FRENCH KNIGHTS.*)

(BURGUNDIANS *form a semicircle round NEMOURS, R., with their backs to Audience and weapons raised*—LOUIS *shields himself among his NOBLES, KNIGHTS, and PAGES, L. C., who advance one step, swords drawn*—FRANCOIS *takes the cross from the hands of one of the PRIESTS, and advances C., between the opposing parties—this is a simultaneous movement.*—*Tableau.*)

FRANCOIS. Hold ! in the name of Heaven, whom ye insult !

NEMOURS. (*lowering his sword, as also do his FOLLOWERS*) Back, gentleman ! (*they do so*) If Charles should triumph still, the terror of his name will be my guard, and better far than all your trusty swords—if he's no more, I'd rather die alone. (*throws his sword at LOUIS's feet—to LOUIS*) To reach thee, king, perforce I did dissemble, and what I undertook I'll answer elsewhere ; now, consign me to the headman of my sire, as one prey more to glut thy appetite.

LOUIS. (*making a sign to TRISTAN to take away NEMOURS*) Grand Provost, let his trial be to-day, his doom to-morrow.

MARIE. (*kneeling, L.*) Pardon, sire, pardon !

LOUIS. Away ! his doom is sealed !

(TRISTAN and SCOTCH GUARDS *advance down stage, R. C.—NEMOURS places himself prisoner between them, and is conducted off, R.—At the same time, BURGUNDIANS and their PAGES make a movement up, and exit, R. U. E.—PEASANTS exit, L. 1 E.—CARDINAL and PRIESTS, L.*)

FRANCOIS. (R.) Oh, King, be merciful !

LOUIS. Had he done naught but outrage me, I might—but to come here before thee, an impotent, to deal with sacred things, and yet with insult—No, I will avenge thy outraged ministry—I will, as I'm the most Christian King.

FRANCOIS. At least let me absolve him.

LOUIS. Do—the guiltier he is, the more he needs thine aid. Yes, go.

FRANCOIS. Wilt thou not think of thyself, my son ?

Exeunt FRANCOIS and TWO PRIESTS, R.

Re-enter FRENCH GUARDS and their OFFICER, R.—They range across the back of stage.

LOUIS. (*after watching FRANCOIS DE PAULE out, returns in a transport of joy and triumph*) Montjoie and St. Denis ! Dunois, the game is ours ! Upon Peronne fly with six thou-

sand lances ! To Burgundy, Torey—let the province of Artois become France in a month. To horse, Dammartin—down upon Flanders—take it, rend, tear, and share it among ye. To horse, I say, and ride for Burgundy ! take my inheritance before the Bold Charles has bequeathed it to me. (to CARDINAL D'ALLY) In the night, Cardinal, let two state messages be sent ; one with six thousand crowns and a letter to the Pope's Legate, another with thirty thousand to the Pope himself—his Holiness has but to consecrate my rights. Share we the spoils, chevaliers ! Now to horse ! But stay—(turning to the rest assembled) The noble duke is dead, gentlemen—he made me at Peronne pass three such nights as I never shall forget—he was my foe. (mildly) But all the resentment ends with death—he was a great man, was our cousin. (takes off his cap—ALL do the same) The court will wear full mourning for a month. (Tableau, and

END OF ACT THE SECOND.

ACT THIRD.

SCENE FIRST.—*The King's bedchamber. Two doors at the wings—a priedieu, L. C., and above it a cross, hung up against the wall—a window with bars across it, L.—moonlight seen through—curtains half closed, concealing a bed in recess, C—a chimney and a fire, R. 2 E.—table covered with handsome velvet cloth, R. U. E.—table, R. C., on which is a night lamp of crimson stained glass, hour-glass, illuminated missal, crucifix, jewelled dagger, rosaries, etc.—large arm-chair, C.—footstool, and four smaller chairs—lights off—red mediums on—key in door, R.*

Enter NEMOURS and COITIER, from door, L. U. E.

COITIER. Come in. Here for a moment we may rest. (*embraces him*)

NEMOURS. (L.) Good Coitier !

COITIER. (R.) Let me look well upon you, dear Nemours—child of my benefactor !

NEMOURS. Whose fate I shall share,

COITIER. By Heaven, thou shalt not die—no !

NEMOURS. (*pressing his hand and looking around*) How can I escape my doom ? See—those bars and iron doors !

COITIER. 'Tis the king's chamber.

NEMOURS. This dungeon !

COITIER. See—a crucifix—a missal—relics used by his hands, and frantically kissed—(*shows him a dagger*) a weapon, which he dares not touch—curtains, behind which fear still seeks him out—in vain he hides—a hideous arm draws them aside, and presses on his heart. He would speak with you, and bade me bring you here.

NEMOURS. See *me*?—and here ! What would he with me ?

COITIER. He bade me sound you, and prepare you for this interview. You may yet obtain a pardon.

NEMOURS. How ?

COITIER. Be useful.

NEMOURS. To him ?

COITIER. Burgundy is his aim. He covets it with the longing of one pregnant with death—he yearns for it with all the petulance of second childhood. So I declared you could win it for him.

NEMOURS. You, Coitier—you !

COITIER. The people—nobles—army—all love you ! You can secure the votes of the assembled states, or at a castle's gate obtain the keys.

NEMOURS. What ! shall I turn traitor to my benefactors ? For whom ? The butcher of my family.

COITIER. Nemours, for Coitier's sake—for thine old servant, save thy dear life, Nemours.

NEMOURS. No, Coitier—I would sooner die than do thy will.

COITIER. You are resolved ?

NEMOURS. I am.

COITIER. See this dungeon—this is my abode. But all the gold the king could give me, would have failed to secure, my services, had he not granted me the privilege of freedom. I alone have right to go and come, and pass the sentinels unquestioned. Here is the talisman—this master-key—take it. (*giving the key*) It gave me liberty—it now gives liberty to thee.

NEMOURS. But, Coitier, his rage will fall on you.

COITIER. Perhaps.

NEMOURS. Your head will answer it.

COITIER. No—he's ill, and cannot do without me. Away ! take this dagger—descend the vaulted stair—at the foot you'll find a door—use that key—a passage leads beneath the moat—and then—liberty, my son—liberty ! Away ! I fear the king's arrival ! Fly ! I'll haste below and stop him, if I can.

Exit, L. D.

NEMOURS. (*coming to the front, after shutting the door of Coitier's room, R. 1 E.—raising the dagger*) Now he's in my power! Oh, fate, this is thy work! He's in my power—the weapon in my hand! Assemble here, ye spectres of his victims! Rise, ye headless crew, and stand about—my father first! There, yonder—wait around that bed—his bed of torture—the altar of revenge and justice! Hush—they come! Away! hush—hush! (*he hides behind the curtains*)

Enter LOUIS, supported by COITIER and COMINE, MARIE, TRISTAN, FOUR SCOTCH GUARDS, and OFFICERS, L.

LOUIS. How dark the night is, and how cold! I tremble!

COITIER. (*leading him to the fire, R.*) There—warm yourself!

LOUIS. (*joyfully*) A fire! But Nemours—what said he?

COITIER. (*making him sit*) Sit there!

LOUIS. The sun is not so sweet. Fire? 'tis life! (*distant organ and chant*) What sounds are those?

MARIE. (*on his L.*) 'Tis from the chapel, where they are watching—praying—that Heaven may show some mercy to your suffering form, and the north wind abate ere morn arrives.

LOUIS. (*looking at her*) Thou dost mine eyes good! Blooming flower of youth, how beautiful thou art! Come—smile!

COMINE. (*c., aside to MARIE*) Obey, Marie!

MARIE. (*weeping*) I would I could.

LOUIS. Tears! Begone, or calm thy grief, I can save him yet!

COITIER. Follow my advice. (*going towards the bed, c.*) To bed, sire.

LOUIS. No, Coitier, not until I see Nemours. (*to TRISTAN*) Go, fetch him, Tristan.

TRISTAN. He is not in my charge. Sentence once pronounced, I wished to finish what I had begun.

MARIE. (*to COMINE*) Heaven!

COMINE. (*aside*) Hush!

LOUIS. (*to COITIER*) True, I forgot, I bade you bring him here.

COITIER. I could not persuade him to come.

LOUIS. I could.

COITIER. (*coming down, c.*) No, I think not.

LOUIS. No?

COITIER. He'd have defied you, and you'd have slain him.

LOUIS. Well !

COITIER. So I've saved him.

LOUIS. Saved ! and hast thou dared to brave me, wretch ? *(to TRISTAN)* And has he, too, escaped thy vigilance ? Which road did he take ? Quick, Tristan ! *(TRISTAN crosses to L.)*

COITIER. Save yourself the trouble, he's beyond your reach.

LOUIS. *(rises)* Begone ! dead or alive I'll have him—away ! *Exit TRISTAN, L.*

MARIE. For my sake, no—for I revealed his name—pardon, pardon !

LOUIS. *(to COMINE)* Away with her !

COMINE. *(leading her off, L. 1 E.)* Come, come.

LOUIS. *(R., pointing to COITIER)* For him, that traitor, death to-morrow.

COITIER. *(c.)* Strike to-day ; but of your after sufferings have a care—I give you but a week to live.

LOUIS. Well, then, I'll die—and yet—I will. *(to the GUARDS)* Retire ! *They retire, L. D. U. E.*

(to COITIER) Coitier, stay ! *(throws himself into an arm-chair, c.)* Oh ! I'm a wretched man !

Exeunt ALL but COITIER and LOUIS, L.
Think not to escape the destiny your due—'twill come—I'll crush you !

COITIER. *(L.)* So you have said already.

LOUIS. Your learning may deceive the vulgar crowd, not me—your art, your cares—I laugh at them. Of what avail are they to me ? I'll do without you and live just as long—I will. Yes, traitor, yes ; the saint, whom I expect, can with a single word resuscitate my strength.

COITIER. Indeed ! speed him here !

LOUIS. While thou, deprived of light and air, confined within an iron cage, shalt from between thy prison bars look out, and see my new youth laugh at thy rage.

(rises and crosses to R.)

COITIER. Agreed !

LOUIS. Ay, ay !

COITIER. It may be so.

LOUIS. *(melting)* False friend ! Ah, Coitier, ungrateful !

COITIER. 'Twas to avoid that charge I saved Nemours. I owed all to his father, and should deem it base to forget all former kindness.

LOUIS. But my kindness—*mine ; that* you have betrayed. Gold I o'erload you with—your hands are full—what more did Nemours to be so beloved ?

COITIER. What did he? why, he gave me all his heart : you, what claim have you to love? Thank Heaven we do but traffic. Let's understand each other—you give from fear, I take from interest—I sell, you purchase—'tis a contract; and where heart's not, there's no ingratitude. Kings think that gold can purchase everything—you pay a courtier or a servitor—friends, sire, we love; and, though their salary were merely one kind look, one grateful word, one pressure of the hand, one kind embrace, they feel they're paid, but do not sell themselves.

LOUIS. (*caressingly*) Good Coitier, I will love thee—ay, I do!

COITIER. Yes, for yourself.

LOUIS. No, not from selfishness—my suffering is extreme I do admit, but Francois may to-morrow give me health—but as a simple friend I here extend my hand.

Enter OLIVER, L. D. 2 E.

OLIVER. Francois de Paule. sire, waits an audience.

LOUIS. Admit him.

Enter FRANCOIS DE PAULE, L. D.

(*to FRANCOIS showing COITIER*) See, my father, he has braved his king, yet I pardon him. (*to COITIER*) Retire!

Conducting him to his room, R. 1 E.
On a friend's faith sleep thou in quietude. (*aside R. after shutting his door*) Ah, traitor! should'st thou useless e'er become! (*signs to OLIVER to retire*) *Exit OLIVER, L. D.*
We are alone.

FRANCOIS. Alone?

LOUIS. (*prostrating himself*) I tremble at thy feet with hope and fear.

FRANCOIS. Rise up, my son.

LOUIS. No, let me kneel; and, bowing thus my head unto the ground, kiss e'en the spot thy holy feet have trod.

FRANCOIS. Arise, I say.

LOUIS. The gift I ask for is so great, I can't enough humiliate myself to beg it.

FRANCOIS. What would you?

LOUIS. All's possible to thee—men's ailments vanish at thy sovereign will—hear my prayer. See this aged, tottering frame; restore my health, efface the lines of age, extend thine hand, and bid me live again.

FRANCOIS. You rave!

LOUIS. Ten years, at least, my father—grant ten years

and I'll heap on thee honors twenty-fold. See, I have relics of the saints, I'll give them to thee for these twenty years; ay, twenty say. Rome, which has power to multiply the saints, would canonize and rank thee amongst the blest, amongst—What do I say? above them all. In thy name great cathedrals will I find—

FRANCOIS. King, Heaven permits not this feeble worm even to know, much less to change, the laws of nature, and to assume such power is blasphemy.

LOUIS. I'm growing tired of this—come, do thy duty, monk—exert for me thy supernatural powers—or, if need be, I'll have resort to force. I'm king—the holy oil has touched my brow.

FRANCOIS. I fear me, king, that in your heart remorse is like a burning wound—kept fresh by crime, and dragging slowly your body to its grave.

LOUIS. Priests have absolved me.

FRANCOIS. Vain hope! True penitence alone can wash your stains away.

LOUIS. Shall I find grace?

FRANCOIS. Heaven grant you may.

LOUIS. You promise it if I confess? Listen, then, and to thee I'll tell that which has never reached the ear of man.

(FRANCOIS *sits himself in large chair, c., and the KING stands with his hands joined.*

FRANCOIS. What hast thou done?

LOUIS. It was rumored that the fear the Dauphin caused the late king hastened him to heaven.

FRANCOIS. A son abridge his aged father's life?

LOUIS. I was that Dauphin!

FRANCOIS. You?

LOUIS. But his weak rule would have ruined France—state interests—

(NEMOURS *is seen to open the bed curtains and look forth occasionally, at intervals, during the scene.*

FRANCOIS. Confess, bad son. Do not excuse thy faults.

LOUIS. I had a brother, who by poison died.

FRANCOIS. By your order?

LOUIS. Some suspected so.

FRANCOIS. Heaven!

LOUIS. If those who said it was my deed had fallen in my power—

FRANCOIS. 'Tis true?

LOUIS. His ghost, from out his coffin walking forth, could alone with impunity betray me.

FRANCOIS. 'Tis true, then?

LOUIS. But he was a traitor, and deserved it.

FRANCOIS. Murderer—fratricide—tremble !

LOUIS. (*falling on his knees*) I do !

FRANCOIS. Repent !

LOUIS. (*dragging himself toward FRANCOIS and clutching his clothes*) Be merciful ! See, kneeling, I deplore another crime ! Nemours—he had conspired—his crime, at least, was proved ; but at his death, beneath the scaffold, his three weeping sons were placed.

FRANCOIS. Barbarian !

LOUIS. Victims unnumbered I have put to death. Captives e'en now—far, far below these floors—groan out forgotten lives !

FRANCOIS. Since these are wrongs which thou canst still repair, come.

LOUIS. Whither ?

FRANCOIS. To release them. Haste—haste—and save thy soul !

LOUIS. And risk my crown as king ? I cannot ! No. It is enough that I repent. The church has pardons which a king can buy.

FRANCOIS. God sells not his—it must be merited.

LOUIS. I am bewildered—I can say no more !

FRANCOIS. Unhappy man, appease the torture of thy guilty soul ! An act of mercy may give back thy sleep—and some, at least, will bless thy waking hours.

LOUIS. I'll see about it. (*peevishly*)

FRANCOIS. Heaven will not wait.

LOUIS. To-morrow !

FRANCOIS. Ere to-morrow, death may seize—this night—this instant !

LOUIS. No, I am too well enclosed, and too well defended.

FRANCOIS. Adieu, then, murderer ! (*going*)

LOUIS. Father, stay !

FRANCOIS. Weep—pray—and not with words—pray with your deeds—atone the past. Farewell !

Exit, having lingered for a moment, L. 1 E.

LOUIS. He's gone ! Yes ! Who will extend a helping hand to me, for rescue from the abyss in which I'm plunged ? I'll pray—he bade me—weep, too, if I can.

(*he kneels on his prie-dieu, R. C., places his hat before him and prays to a small image of the Virgin hanging to his coat—*

NEMOURS opens the curtains, C., and standing still, with dagger in his hand watching him.

NEMOURS. No shriving time did he allow my father.

(*hautbois heard in the distance, playing the tune to which the PEASANTS had danced.*

LOUIS. (*rising*) What do I hear? (*approaches window, L.—moonlight*) Their merry dancing o'er, the village peasants travel home. Ah! happy mortals! Gentle sleep is theirs. They slumber on; but I—(*turns from window—advances to chair, c.—sees NEMOURS*) Ha!

NEMOURS. (R.) Silence!

LOUIS. I'm dumb!

NEMOURS. Not a cry!

LOUIS. No!

NEMOURS. Thy guards defend thee well.

LOUIS. Nemours, what wouldst thou?

NEMOURS. Vengeance!

LOUIS. Judge not in passion.

NEMOURS. I am not thy judge!

LOUIS. And who is, then?

NEMOURS. My father!

LOUIS. Thou, Nemours?

NEMOURS. My father!

LOUIS. Thou alone!

NEMOURS. My father!

LOUIS. He would slay me.

NEMOURS. Thou'st judged thyself.

LOUIS. Be merciful!

NEMOURS. Wert thou?

LOUIS. Oh, hear my prayer.

NEMOURS. Dost recollect *his* prayer to *thee*—this last appeal? 'Tis here! (*showing him a scroll tied with silk taken from his breast*)

LOUIS. I ne'er received—

NEMOURS. Which was by thee rejected.

LOUIS. Not by me, Nemours.

NEMOURS. And which, when dead, we found upon his heart—my only heritage. Behold it, king! it is thy death-warrant. Impostor, see—behold and read!

LOUIS. Forgive.

NEMOURS. Beneath this dagger, read—to whet thy memory.

LOUIS. I cannot.

NEMOURS. 'Neath the axe he well could write; read, as he wrote.

LOUIS. I cannot; no, I die. This dagger, which I shun, and which thy hand directs against me, dazzles, blinds me, no, I cannot—no!

NEMOURS. Listen!

LOUIS. Mercy!

NEMOURS. (*reads from the paper*) "My very dear, and

sovereign lord, as much and as humbly as I can, I recommend myself to your pity and mercy." Well—

LOUIS. I was severe, and cruel, but I'll make amends. I'll make full atonement—put me to the proof; and by my deeds I'll show my penitence.

NEMOURS. Listen again. (*continues reading*) "I will serve you so well and so loyally, that you shall know I am truly penitent. Have pity on me, and on my poor children. Let me not die for my transgressions to their shame, that they may survive me in dishonor and in beggary. For God's sake, sire, have pity upon me and my poor children!" Look—read—read!

LOUIS. Where?

NEMOURS. (*pointing to the place with a dagger*) There!

LOUIS. "Your poor friend, Jacques d'Armagnac!"

NEMOURS. And there—his blood!

LOUIS. Nemours!

NEMOURS. His blood. Oh, what punishment can meet thy crimes? How make it equal to thy matchless guilt?

LOUIS. (*falling at NEMOURS' feet*) Mercy, Nemours!

NEMOURS. There's but one torture can suffice.

LOUIS. (*sinking in terror, L. C.*) It is my death!

(*falls insensible.*)

NEMOURS. (*raising the dagger, and then throwing it from him*) No, 'tis thy life. What, I free thee? No, live on, or rather, living die; die slowly, too, that all thy cruel schemes may add accumulated woes, and foretaste give of thine eternity. Ay, wait till death, both just and pitiless, shall seize that soul which never mercy felt, loaded with crime so high that even Heaven's mercy has no measure for thee; live, live, if it is thy wish—thy prayers. Heaven grant it, then; prolong his damned life, until his crimes reach, Babel-like, to heaven to bring its judgment down.

Exit R. 2 E.

LOUIS. (*utters some inarticulate sounds as he recovers*) Help! Tristan! An assassin! Murder! Help! Bring torches! Run! He seeks to take my life—he lifts his dagger!

Enter TRISTAN, SCOTCH GUARDS and OFFICERS, L. 2 E., with torches.

Tear it from his hands! Kill him! There he lies concealed!

(*pointing to COITIER'S room, R. 2 E.* — TRISTAN, FOUR GUARDS, and OFFICER go off, R. D., with torches—OFFICER and FOUR GUARDS range behind, near bed, with torches.

Assassins! There—I see them everywhere! (*to GUARDS*) Surround me! (*the GUARDS make one step forward*) No, no!

I'm afraid of all ! Look behind the curtains. (*the OFFICERS go behind curtains and return*) I heard a voice pronounce my name—I saw one traitor creep beneath my bed.

GUARD return from R. D.

What, can you not find 'em ? I see them, though—the room is full of them. There—there—there !

(*falls in convulsions into OFFICERS' arms, L. C.—Tableau, and closed in by*)

SCENE SECOND--*A Room in the Castle.*

Enter TRISTAN and COMINE, L.

TRISTAN. Hush ! there is a stir in the king's chamber—some one comes out—'tis Oliver.

COMINE. Thank Heaven !

Enter OLIVER, R.

What news—how is the king ?

OLIVER. He breathes again.

TRISTAN. Will he recover ?

OLIVER. 'Tis doubtful ; should he but relapse, his life is gone—another fit will surely be his last—he asks for Coitier.

TRISTAN. What answer gave you ?

OLIVER. None—'twas needless ; for scarce has he expressed a wish, but 'tis forgotten. His brain wanders. He speaks at random—words, not thoughts. He does not dream how far it is gone with him. He said but now that he would hold a council—commanded me to place the crown upon his head—the weight of it sunk his chin upon his breast. There he sits, gibbering his orders out, wrapped in his royal mantle, that fits him like a shroud.

COMINE. Does he speak of Nemours ?

OLIVER. No—he has forgotten all that dreadful scene which plunged him into this frenzy. He asks for Coitier, though, and seems to miss him.

TRISTAN. What shall I do ? I have the king's strict order for his arrest. He is now in the dungeon next Nemours ; and if I receive no respite for them, they die to-morrow.

OLIVER. Nemours was sentenced for this morning.

TRISTAN. The Dauphin bade me stay the execution. Sieur Oliver, let's not forget ourselves.

OLIVER. We'll not, good Tristan, but make common cause.

COMINE. Sirs, as you list—but take a friend's advice. The

court will o'er you keep the strictest watch, and punish, too, at need.

OLIVER. (*to* TRISTAN) 'Tis but the truth Sieur d'Argenton has told.

TRISTAN. To thee as well, methinks.

OLIVER. Thy hand, good Tristan, was too prompt; you'll have to answer many a bloody deed.

TRISTAN. Prythee, who were the accomplices therein?

OLIVER. I executed not.

TRISTAN. Nor I advised. But come—remember, this is a common cause; therefore, let us look to ourselves. *Exeunt* L.

SCENE THIRD—*Grand Hall of Audience. Large folding windows to open, c., scaffold erected beyond—throne, L.—couch, R. C.*

The COURT assembled.

LOUIS totters on, R. U. E., supported—he wears the crown, and is enveloped in large robe.

TRISTAN, Yon ghost the king? My reign is ended, then!

LOUIS. (*slowly advancing, then suddenly stopping*) These—who are they?

OLIVER. Oliver, sire.

LOUIS. Ha, thou, Oliver! Ay, my faithful—

OLIVER. Here is Comine, and Tristan.

LOUIS. I see them—ay, and recognize them, too. (*leans on chair*) Welcome, friends! (*peevishly to his ATTENDANTS*) Leave me—I need you not. Begone, I say!

ATTENDANTS retire, L. 2 E.

OLIVER. Repose a while.

LOUIS. Why? d'ye think I cannot stand? (*seats himself on sofa*).

COMINE. Oh, sire, as well as I. But do not overtax your strength.

LOUIS. (*turns to* TRISTAN) Why does he look at me with that unmoved and melancholy gaze? Does he think me changed? Who told thee so, old friend?

TRISTAN. Who—me? I think I never saw you looking better. (*aside*) He has not an hour's life in him!

LOUIS. So I am. So to work—to business! Introduce the court. We will hold a levee—now. (*gradually falls asleep*)

OLIVER. (*in an undertone*) He sleeps.

COMINE. 'Twere well to warn him of his coming death.

TRISTAN. Warn him—and why?

COMINE. E'en now his feeble will might exercise itself in generous deeds.

TRISTAN. Ay, he might have some legacy to leave us.

OLIVER. You tell him, then.

TRISTAN. It needs one whom he loves, who knows the art to allay the bitter news—just such a one as you.

OLIVER. Me?

COMINE. } Yes—you.

TRISTAN. }

OLIVER. My tender love for him—my strong emotion—would spoil all. It needs a man of strong resolves. Comine, now, has just the tongue for such a task.

COMINE. Me?—why so? 'Twere better out at once, boldly, as Tristan would, and end it.

TRISTAN. Come—confess between ourselves, 'tis no such pleasant^{er} thing.

LOUIS. (*rousing himself*) Why do you whisper thus? Where's Coitier? Go, tell him I am here.

TRISTAN. But, sire, you know—

LOUIS. I know he is not here. (*sternly*) Obey!

Exit TRISTAN, R.—LOUIS *walks to front, supported by* COMINE *and* OLIVER.

I feel this morning strong enough to try that Barbary steed I had from Spain. Go, Oliver, bid my equerry prepare it.

OLIVER. (R., *astonished*) What, sire?

LOUIS. I'll take a gallop through the forest—announce the king is starting for the chase.

OLIVER. Must I?

LOUIS. I'll too try the falcon, crooked-back Richard has from England sent. What, not yet gone! *Exit* OLIVER, R. This pomp sits heavy on me. Why have they buried me in these robes? Take off my crown. (COMINE *takes off his crown*) There, it oppresses me. There, place it near me—there! No, beneath my eyes—my hand—that I may grasp it.

COMINE. Believe me, none would dare to touch it, sire.

LOUIS. No, death would be their doom—that they know.

Enter COITIER, *led by* TRISTAN, R.

COITIER. (*to* TRISTAN) Fear not—the king shall hear it from myself. I'll tell him.

LOUIS. Ha, 'tis thou, good Coitier! Whence comest thou?

COITIER. Whence? On my soul, it no small patience needs to answer calmly to this railery! Whence come I?

LOUIS. Tell me!

COITIER. See this wounded hand—bruised, mangled, by your jailer's chains!

LOUIS. I know not what you mean!

COITIER. Whence come I? From your dungeon.

LOUIS. Thou! Who sent thee thither?

COITIER. (*aside*) Who! (*aloud*) Thymself.

LOUIS. (*anxiously approaching COITIER*). Whence—where—for what?

COITIER. (*indignantly*) To charge me with so base a plot! Could I have perpetrated a crime like this? What could have hindered me? No one interfered. Unarmed, I could have done the deed, and left no trace. What, hide a man behind your bed?

LOUIS. (*taking COITIER's hand*) Hold, good Coitier, hold!

COITIER. Conceal him?

LOUIS. Hist! a frightful dream! I remember a man behind those curtains—to murder me—ay, dagger! Ha, it was Nemours—Nemours! No mercy for him—none!

COMINE. (*aside to COITIER*) What hast thou done? He had forgotten him.

COITIER. Forgotten?

LOUIS. It was Nemours. I do remember all—but he was taken. (*to TRISTAN, R.*) Is he dead.

TRISTAN. (*R.*) I waited, sire—

LOUIS. (*furiously*) What, traitor, not dead yet?

TRISTAN. (*trembling*) The Dauphin, sire, in pity for his fate, bid me suspend—

LOUIS. An order from his king. How now—how now? What's happened—did I hear aright? Am I dead? What's this?—my son—my son! beware, who reigns too soon may chance not reign at all.

COITIER. (*L. C., coming down*) Dismiss at once all notions of revenge. Repent, your death's at hand.

LOUIS. (*staggers back*) Eh—what?

COITIER. This very day is all that's left thee—make good use of it.

LOUIS. This day—my last! No, no! Coitier, 'tis false!
(*sinks upon sofa.*)

COITIER. By yon sun which shines above us, 'tis true; therefore weigh well what you do. One murder more will add fresh tortures to your dying soul. You'll answer for't.

LOUIS. (*conscience-stricken, then rushes to TRISTAN, R.—fu-*

rious) Tristan, away, and execute my will—his head within the hour, or yours shall answer it. Away, away!

Exit TRISTAN, L.

(staggers back toward couch, R. C., then falls on it) Come, Coitier, tell me true, confess you only meant to frighten me. Is't not so—say?

COITIER. I have spoken the simple truth.

LOUIS. Your words freeze up my soul. My life's blood thickens. Yes, 'tis true—I'm choked! Oh, agony! this is not death, good Coitier—no, 'tis weakness, this—say it is but weakness, but not death—it is not death. Comine—Coitier!

COITIER. Go—go, fetch the Dauphin.

Exit COMINE, hastily, L.

LOUIS. Save me, good Coitier! you can—you can—save—
(falls swooning on the couch.)

COITIER. *(silently gazing at side of couch)* I'm free at last. The tyrant is no more—his marble hands, his lips, his fixed eyes. Ah, his heart still beats—he may recover yet. Shall I restore him? *(hears the bell toll)* No—Nature, deal with him as thou wilt. By his death, lives Nemours—the headsman's labor spared. But here's the prince.

Enter DAUPHIN and COMINE, L. 2 E.

DAUPH. *(crossing to LOUIS, on couch, R.)* My father, speak but one word. *(to COITIER)* What, too late! Has he, then, ceased to live, and left me here to mourn a while alone? *(DAUPHIN kneels by side of bed)* Father, liege, sovereign! Alas! those eyes look not severely on me now—sealed close by death—this hand I now may clasp, and that I may bedew it with my tears, I had to wait until 'twas lifeless. And now—'tis death—no tenderness of thine allows these lips to press it. *(takes up the crown from table, R.)* Oh, cruel power! Must I accept thee now? Poms and baubles, what's their real worth? Farewell all peace to him that wears a crown! Must it then, now, encircle my brow, and make me old before my time? Yet, when it's mine of right, oh, may I prove a king whom France can love—love France myself—defend the oppressed—uphold all honest rights—make justice supreme, and love my subjects as myself. A good king can never groan beneath a crown.

Enter MARIE, breathless, L.

Marie!

MARIE. The ring—'tis not too late! *(shows the ring)* Your promise, Prince. *(bell tolls)* Quick! Hark, yonder bell proclaims his instant death. For pity, save Nemours!

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aescend down steps. Enter NEMOURS, who embraces MARIE, L.

COITIER. There, sire, in your first act of mercy, see your only hope !

LOUIS. Hope—hope? Ay, speak of that! Life—life! Sustain me, Coitier—you—all—pray for me—pray; (*they all kneel except FRANCOIS*) Pray, I entreat! pray, I command! (*falls dead on couch—trumpets wail—soft music—NOBLES, PAGES, etc., form a tableau of interest.*

CURTAIN.

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